DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 293 SO 019 663

AUTHOR Bucciarelli, Claudio
TITLE Youth Behavior in Various Areas of Social Experience.
PUB DATE Oct 88
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the International Conference on the Development of Civic Responsibility Among Youth (Urbino, Italy, October 8-15, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Measures; Behavior Patterns; Foreign Countries; National Surveys; Research Projects; *Social Influences; *Youth
IDENTIFIERS *Italians; *Italy

ABSTRACT

The composite results from eight surveys conducted between 1985 and 1987 by CENSIS (Social Investment Study Center, Italy) reveal some behavioral trends of Italian youth. Part 1 of this paper discusses the indications from the collected data. The instruments tested youth perceptions on seven topics that included values orientation, formal education, extracurricular activities, employment, social and religious institutions, interpersonal relationships, and local and global awareness of society. Part 2 discusses Italian youth in terms of: (1) the prolonging of youthfulness; (2) the multiplicity of social experience; (3) the need for the immaterial; (4) the demand for realistic values; (5) the fragmentation of life and identity; (6) the role of non-conflict; and (7) the inability of institutions to fulfill needs. Italian youth were more realistic and sought openness in communication, employment, and emotional exchange as well as satisfaction of their desires. Two tables and a nine-item bibliography are included. (DJC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED314293

YOUTH BEHAVIOR IN VARIOUS AREAS OF SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

by

Claudio Bucciarelli

Prepared for presentation to the
International Conference on
The Development of Civic Responsibility Among Youth
October 8-15, 1988
The University of Urbino, Italy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
CLAUDIO BUCCIARELLI
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

50 019 663

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

YOUTH BEHAVIOR IN VARIOUS AREAS OF SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

In recent years CENSIS (1) has focused continuous attention on the phenomenology of youth problems in Italy in the form of eight surveys conducted between 1985 and 1987. Two of these were carried out on a nationally representative sample; the other six, still based on a representative sample, were done in a number of Italian provinces: Trieste, Trento, Siracusa, Rieti and Ferrara.

The composite nature of the Censis data seems significant enough to indicate the subjects, problems, and interpretative keys concerning the main areas of youth experience. The results read transversally show trends relating to youth behaviour in different areas of social experience: education, occupations, institutions, leisure, membership in associations, family, value orientations and emerging problems.

To summarize the trends and ensure greater immediacy in presentation, this paper will deal only with the indications that have been amply demonstrated; those interested in the detailed statistical data and the full interpretive comment on these surveys are referred to two published reports. (2)

---

1. CENSIS (Social Investment Study Center) has been operating since 1964 in the field of social research, focusing attention on the changing phenomena of Italian society.
2. CENSIS, Dossier Giovani: Protagonismo e disagio, in "Quindicinale di Note e Commenti," nos. 10-11-12, 1986, pages 138; Bucciarelli, C., Cooperazione internazionale: il punto di vista dei giovani in "Censis Note e Commenti," no. 4, 1987, 3-19.

1. SCENES EXAMINED: BEING YOUNG IN THE EIGHTIES

Young people have always been a difficult category to interpret. They make a fascinating, yet elusive subject of study. It has been rightly said that they reflect the ambivalence of transition processes: on one hand they have a symbolic role as catalyst of the hope intrinsic in social change and, on the other, they reflect faithfully all the resistance and contradictions which the expected change inevitably generates. In a society where reality is fleeting and complex as a result of rapid social and cultural changes, youth of today is passing from a homogeneous to a very a differentiated, heterogeneous and complex social condition. The difficulty lies in finding "interpretive categories" to read the specific phenomenon. (3)

In discussing the young people analyzed and the trends of a "qualitative" nature on which the surveys on Italian youth behaviour focused, some of the topics have been grouped to facilitate synthesis and more immediate comprehension. Seven social scenarios will be considered.

---

3. Cfr. G. Milanesi, La condizione giovanile tra emarginazione e lotta per l'identita' In "Orientamenti Pedagogici", XXXIII, 1, 1985, 7-22.

1.1 VALUE ORIENTATION SCENARIO

a) The issue viewed from the "needs" angle

Transition to a post-industrial society should mean, in a so-called complex society, the passage from "material needs" (of an economic type according to an industrial development logic) to "post-material needs" (linked to the quality of life: relationships, participation, expressiveness, meaning, etc.). On the basis of this assumption, a question, composed of a series of 14 items corresponding to a set of chiefly existential needs of an individual and social nature, was asked. (See Table 1).

A glance at the overall data, disregarding the different percentage positions, shows that the first five items chosen and preferred by young Italians in both the North and the South are basically the same: the most intensely felt needs are of a cultural/cognitive kind and of a affective/relational kind.

Initial interpretation on the basis of these very definite preferences shows that the young people interviewed placed emphasis on the private sphere in the sense that they directed their attention principally to subjects regarding the individual, at least as far as immediate and primary interests are concerned. This indicates that subjective identity has reacquired importance.

The surveys show rather clearly that the interviewees express an attitude which is a mixture between the search

to fulfill radical needs of a clear, expressive orientation (self-fulfilment, friendship, love, ethics, play, culture, reflection) and the search to satisfy instrumental needsin an acquisitive way through the consumption and control of material goods, made manifest in possessions, money and power.

b) The issue viewed from the "values" angle

Another question in the questionnaire was centered on a nominal scale of 20 items relating to a broad and tested range of orientations and values of a social, civic, cultural and relational nature. The purpose of this question was to measure the degree and the substance of the choices of the young people interviewed in respect of the importance they attributed to the specific values/orientations, also on the basis of how feabile they thought it was to achieve them. Clearly, the perception of young people in making these choices about the most important matters in life is conditioned more by what "things should be" than by actual reality.

Table 1 - Preferential choices of needs

Northern Youth A lot-quite a lot %	Needs	Southern Youth A lot-quite alot %
88.8	1. Need to have fun	90.1
97.1	2. Need to learn and know things	96.2
88.0	3. Need to be part of a group of friends	93.4
95.0	4. Need to love	93.3
55.0	5. Need to believe in God	83.7
92.7	6. Need to succeed in life	94.5
50.4	7. Need to be different from others	51.3
87.7	8. Need to be independent from others	78.5
92.8	9. Need to be loved	93.2
81.3	10. Need to manage their own sexuality the way they see fit	72.0
83.1	11. Need to help someone	89.2
83.4	12. Need to do something important	89.5
76.7	13. Need to believe in someone or something	72.2
85.6	14. Need to travel to know other peoples and nations	84.8

Source: Censis Survey 1985, 1986

The emerging trend shows there is a fragmentation of the points/values to which importance in life should be given (Table 2):

- first of all, the prevailing values/orientations are those relating to self-fulfillment in a "personalist" key (friendship, love, culture-education), in a "social productivity" key (family, work, professionality), and in a "leisure-play" key (entertainment and sports);
- following some distance behind are a combination of values/orientations of the "sense production" type (religious faith, morality); "expressive communication" (music, fantasy, sensations, beauty); "social realism" (money, social commitment, knowing how to run risks to live new experiences and effect innovations);
- less relevant finally, are other values/orientations: "sex separate from love" finds relatively little consensus, for "politics" little interest is shown, and enjoyment in imitating the "look" proposed in mass media symbols and models is almost insignificant.

To simpify the data into a single interpretive key, it can be said that the varied gamut of inclinations emerging highlights a certain <u>fragmentation of individual experience</u> which seems particularly obvious in the inability to find a single point on which to hinge or give a "global sense" to one's own daily life experience; it may well be that it is not an "inability" as an definite "intention" not to find such a

Table 2 - Importance assigned to values in life

Northern Youth A lot- quite a lot %	Values	Southern Youth A lot-quite alot %
95.1	1. Culture and education	94.6
34.3	2. Sex separate from love	38.2
97.8	3. Love	95.7
96.2	4. Work	96.0
97.5	5. Friendship	98.0
49.4	6. Religious faith	78.7
94.0	7. Family	97.3
84.3	8. Sensations	69.8
26.1	9. Politics	23.5
76.8	10. Sports	83.4
82.3	11. Fantasy	73.7
92.7	12. Entertainment	94.2
67.0	13. Social engagement	71.5
79.9	14. Money	76.6
72.3	15. Morality	74.6
76.7	16. Music	74.3
69.3	17. Knowing how to run risks to have new experiences	63.5
89.4	18. Professionality	87.1
10.6	19. Look like most admired symbol/models	21.3
58.2	20. Beauty	68.5

Source: Censis Surveys 1985, 1986

pivot since young people today, faced with an excess of opportunity which today's complex society offers seem reluctant to make a definitive investment of their own resources in a single value opportunity or life choice.

1.2. FORMAL EDUCATION SCENARIO

The basic feature in the main trends regarding relationship between young people and scholastic institutions is the fact that this relationship has ceased to be characterized by many of its most radically problematic aspects. Young people seem to have "adapted" to the school condition inasmuch as the importance of the institution, that is school, is recognized as a means to success and social recognition even if the contents of school education are subject to criticism, centering primarily on the lack of relevance of school to the world of work and to society in general.

More specifically, as regards this area of social experience the following patterns have been confirmed as trends:

- young people do not feel a deep disaffection for the way in which school functions and if this feeling exists it is only marginal. The school is still considered the main instrument for overall education and training for life;
- despite this general feeling, a well defined critical tendency in evaluating the type of education the school provides is manifest both as regards the complex emerging

demands of a society in transformation and as regards the specific conditions in the area in which the school is situated, which are often not exploited as a source of learning;

- young people have a good critical capacity for evaluating the professional competence of the teacher and his/her ability to relate as a teacher, and this evaluation, despite some negative aspects noted especially in the didactic skills of teachers, tends to be positive;
- furthermore, despite a rich cultural tradition in the areas in which the surveys were conducted, there are few occasions, both quantitatively and qualitatively, for informal educational activities, and hence a shortage of exchange between the "formal" and "informal" education systems;
- finally, the data confirm only in part the hypothesis that the subjective perception young people have of the split between education/work is an obstacle to real opportunities for future integration in the working work - further aggravated by the Italian employment situation.

1.3 EXTRA-SCHOLASTIC EDUCATION SCENARIO

Alongside "official education" which fails in some ways to provide adequately for the evolutionary processes in society, a broad range of educational and cultural opportunities, of doubtful quality at times, has emerged somewhat chaotically. It could be defined as an extended

educational or extra-scholastic system as it helps to form the "combined curriculum", made up of studies, experiences (including work experience) and leisure time activities. Supplementary educational activities are now available in new forms of publications and through mass media, in the numerous possibilities for physical and corporal expression and sports activities, in membership in associations, in participation in artistic and cultural activities, in travelling and study holidays and so on. All these forms can be cultural and are a great potential for learning and education.

This composite, integrated system plays an important part in the free time sphere and not only among young people but among people of all ages and occupations and of both sexes. These activities have particular relevance for young people for a series of "structural" reasons (higher level of schooling, more free time, supplementary educational value, greater availability of funds) and for strictly "existential" reasons (enhanced quality of life, greater spreading of cultural trends; a different value given to one's job and the quantity of information/communications, and so on).

The simultaneous presence and interaction of the above-mentioned motives determine an intricately interacting network of needs and responses. The far from rosy occupational prospects for young people at present oblige them, so to speak, to make use of their spare time for accumulating a broad

curriculum (studying foreign languages or informatics) to strengthen their position on the job market.

The emerging picture is certainly very interesting, if composite and not always easy to interpret. First of all, the types of activities young people seem to prefer are linked to the sphere of travelling and holidays, music and sport; there is then a prevalence of expressive types of activity in which the social aggregation aspect of the activity plays an important role. As for membership in formal associations, the importance of sports (both to practice and to support) emerges again, followed by membership in cultural and religious associations. It is interesting that young people feel that associative participation is not only a way to enrich their general, and especially professional, curriculum, but that the whole "extended educational system" is a road which might lead to new professions (related to the production of culture, entertainment, new information servcies, new ways of travelling, etc.) and although they may not be formally recognized they are spreading rapidly and becoming consolidated.

1.4 "JOB" PROBLEM SCENARIO

The problem of jobs has become emblematic of the new generation. Since this paper makes a qualitative analysis of youth behaviour I would refer you to other papers for an overall analysis of the quantitative statistical data on the phenomenon of underemployment, non-employment and unemployment

among youth in Italy today. The data in the Censis surveys cited above are mainly based on young people's perception of the "school-work" transition.

In summary, the trends in youth behaviour as regards work are these:

- there is neither disaffection nor refusal to work but a pragmatic attitude or readiness to select from among the job opportunities offered, with a tendency to prefer a job with features commonly considered desirable;
- this conception of work may be defined realistically as having both personalistic features (allowing self-fulfillment) and instrumental features (permitting access to consumer goods) with a certain equilibrium between the two values, even if work is viewed for its objective conditions as a necessity rather than a choice;
- work is not considered as an all-exclusive value in life; it is viewed as a whole for both the contractual and ethical aspects; often the same people have different cultural models; a job is considered both as a source of income/security and a place for expression and personal growth;
- as regards the instrumental conception of work, what prevails is a pragmatic attitude which leads to a complex acceptance of work culture (with marginal demands for self-fulfillment/granting of identity through work; precariousness is not dramatized); there is much talk

today of "segmented unemployment" because there tends to be a split between job and occupational activity, to the point that a job which gives security is sought so as to allow room for another more satisfying or pleasant occupation;

- there is a prevalent flexibility in attitude as regards the way to enter the working world - an attitude which is equidistant between desiring the security of a wage-paying job and opting for self-employment. On one hand, there is a tendency to prefer a form of self-employment, but at the same time, from another point of view, there is a tendency to prefer work in a large company rather than in a small one; a similar flexible attitude is found as regards job satisfaction, willingness to move, choices and projects on how to invest in one's professional future.

1.5. "INSTITUTIONS" PROBLEM SCENARIO

The relationship of youth with institutions of a social or religious nature, local government institutions, trade unions and so on, is another aspect dealt with. As regards faith in individual institutions, or how well they uphold the ideals and values they profess, the family emerges in first place as point of reference for young people's need for security and affective exchange; "specialized" institutions (school, church, police, UN, EEC, Nato) rate next, while no public institutions representing political or

economic interests, or other groups and organizations, acted as real points of reference for the majority of young people.

More in detail, trends in youth behaviour can be divided in the following way:

- young people certainly distinguish one institution from the next and do not indulge in blanket acceptances or refusals; they make assessments case by case;
- there is a broad and clearly expressed lack of confidence in state institutions (parliament, political parties, government and so on) and a slightly greater trust in institutions subject to greater direct control (first of all, the family, and to a certain extent the school);
- there are differentiated attitudes even to state institutions; there is a wide-spread negative judgement as regards representative political and government bodies, even local bodies; this is less accentuated in the case of some operational institutions which perform specific, concrete, immediately visible functions (police, church);
- the criterion of trust based on proximity and direct controlability, as a necessary condition for reliability, is valid for the family and to a lesser extent the school; the opposite is also true, so that the interviewees attribute a certain validity and efficiency to very far-off bodies (EEC, UN, Nato);
- furthermore, according to the majority of young people interviewed (on the relative value of various socio-

professional categories in society), agricultural workers, factory workers, technicians, scientists and craftsmen should count more, and the impact of politicians, trade unions leaders, industrialists, bankers and the clergy should be curtailed;

- finally, young people, as has been seen, remain critical towards the whole institutional sphere and also show definite disaffection for politics as such; there is a fairly critical attitude to the problem of military service, with significant minority categories which prefer alternate, or so-called civilian, service.

1.6. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS SCENARIO

The sphere of interpersonal relationships is examined here. This "area of experience" includes matters concerning individual behaviour or the behaviour of small groups within the "affective" realm of daily life. It deals especially with the subject of the family and marriage, both how young people view their own family of origin and their attitudes to marriage and less institutionalized or less formal unions.

An overall look at the data concerning this area of social experience shows clearly that the family nucleus remains a dominant, widely-shared value and indicates that the hypothesis according to which the family is much less central in the value system of young people seems ill-founded; further investigation would nonetheless be necessary to ascertain the

quality of the finding to decide whether the family in youth experience belongs to the area "chances missed" or to the area of "opportunities dwindling in importance".

In this particular area, the survey shows that the level of verbal communication between parents and children is good inasmuch as the young people seem to involve their parents in some of their own experiences. Life choices however, seem to be relegated to an area of "silence" and the separation from parental models in this area is radical. While some subjects are discussed and certain "levels of agreement" reached, there is tacitly agreed "silence" concerning a whole area of subjects (sex, the new families the young people may establish, politics, religion) over which opinions could be so diverging as to cause conflict which might alter equilibrium of affection and exchange of resources and services.

On the basis of these trends, it could be suggested that classic generational conflict seems to have been overcome and the feeling discussed in the book entitled "Senza padri ne' maestri" (without fathers nor teachers) (Ricolfi-Sciolla, 1980) seems to have led to a shift in focus which could be summed up as "not too far from our fathers". It is important to stress however that the condition of the young has never been less simple than it is today because of the necessity of having to cross that threshold into adulthood in a much weakened transgressional position, that is, without one of the important links in the development chain: the opposition of the adult-

authority; the only possible form of transgression is the young person's perception of himself as having surpassed the adult.

In considering the other aspect inherent in the subject of family, the new element noted is the far from irrelevant tendency of young people towards forms of union (living together) which are different from marriage. The affective relationship with the partner was another topic of investigation; evidence shows that love is certainly considered the most important factor determining the success of a sentimental relationship but necessary complements to love are dialogue, trust, mutual respect; factors such as procreation, being engaged in the same kind of work, believing in the same ideals, having the same religious faith are deemed less important.

The analysis of the sexual morals of young people in the Censis surveys shows generally mature and responsible sexual morals among youth, based chiefly on "disinclination to make judgements" inasmuch as it seems the acquired right of each one to live his own experiences and express himself in different existential situations as he best sees fit. Even if certain behaviours considered "deviant" from commonly accepted standards are judged admissible, this should not lead us to believe that such behaviour is regarded as an integral part of the life experience of young people when in fact it merely comes into the "area of tolerance" towards the actions of others but does not concern one's own actions. In fact, an increasingly rigorous

attitude seems to be wide-spread among young people as regards homosexuality and drugs, although this may be explained principally by the AIDS phenomenon.

Data relating to the last topic in this broad "area of experience", that is "informal aggregation models", indicate clearly the very relevant function of the group in giving the emotional support necessary for the development of the personality of the individual and a distinct preference for "informal", rather than "formal", rigidly structured types of aggregation. The preference for informal associative models is explained by the fact that such forms represent the symbolic expression of youth needs (independence from the family and from adults, cohesion and identification, communication, pragmatism, and so on) which have not really been fulfilled. The absolute necessity of friendship relations in fact is linked to the large affective charge young people invest in them, and to the fundamental role they play in the socialization and identification process, offering as they do the opportunity for learning and for testing reality round about, and for new experiences in general.

1.7. EMERGING PROBLEMS SCENARIO

Emerging problems, in reference to youth, means investigating young people's awareness of the real and potential problems to which they are exposed - problems of both a microsocial and macrosocial nature.

Questioned on the problems which most worried them, the young interviewees expressed great concern for the various areas of tension on the world scene, revealing their awareness of the planetary dimension of their existence. In young people accustomed to oral and visual symbols, the vast increase in the amount of information available (and the speed with which it is transmitted) gives a global vision of the world in which we live and an awareness of the interconnections and interrelations between the natural and political phenomena of the entire planet.

In connection with emerging world problems (with particular attention to the south of the planet), young people tend to see a close link between the "underdevelopment" and "development". In their perception, development is no longer associated with the economic factor as it is in the Western world, but is increasingly related to an economic growth not based on the exploitation of resources, to greater respect for human rights, to greater "self-reliance", (self-development, self-determination) and to an emphasis on ecological problems. The importance of the quality of life, for example, reappears constantly. Improving the quality of life means, for young people, overcoming social injustices which often characterize those countries.

On the <u>world level</u>, the issues about which young people are chiefly and concretely concerned are: the threat of nuclear war and the promotion of peace, the safeguarding of the

environment, hunger in the world, drugs and terrorism; a relevant minority of the interviewees express their commitment to such problems by participating in demonstrations and marches and the collection of signatures for petitions. At a local level, the main questions young people focus on concretely are: the risks of non-employment /unemployment, the poor quality of social services available and the rise in forms of deviance and petty and organized crime, especially in large centres and some high risk zones where the pressure exerted by the "camorra" and the "mafia" is strong. All these features combine to make the youth condition far from easy or at least perceived as being beset by obstacles of various kinds.

As for the drug problem, the results of the surveys indicate that ideas on drugs and the difference between the various types are fairly clear: if on one hand, there is a widespread "acceptance" of light drugs, on the other, there are reassuringly few direct contacts with hard drugs and very severe judgements on their social legitimacy. While on one hand the risk of young people succumbing to drug addiction seems to have diminished, risk area seems to be spreading. Young Italians are well aware of the importance of prevention rather than repression and favour therapeutic treatment and assistance rather than punitive action, showing that they feel directly involved in the drug addiction problem without considering it criminal offense.

2. WHO IS THE YOUNG ITALIAN

In attempting to describe the characteristics of the young Italian of today and how he feels, or rather what his individual youth experience is, one realizes immediately that a "key-word" interpretive line must be used, based on:

2.1 the prolonging of youth, owing to a series of structural factors such as the longer transition period between school or studies and full entry into the working world; a trend towards increasingly higher levels of educational or professional qualification; the tendency of work acceptance being conditioned by other interests and demands, considered more important (artistic or cultural interests, travel, volunteer work, fruition of consumer models and enjoyment of leisure engaged in play or cultural activities);

2.2 the multiplicity both as regards opportunities "offered" (eductaional opportunies, instruments for entering the working world, cultural leisure timeactivities and so on) and as regards the behaviour of "demand"; this means that in the same person different reference models, not necessarily consistent with each other, are present at the same time. In this complex society it is possible to pursue diverse itineraries to reach individual and collective self-fulfillment; there is in the end a multiplicity and a surplus of opportunity for young people today and this means that the socialization experiences available are such

that they do not necessarily require a total investment of energy and interest;

2.3 immateriality and the growth of the symbolic revealed in the rising quantity of information, and in the quality of the collective imaginary vision, in the increased variety of available services, in the real importance of certain facts and ideas (having a certain "look" in dressing, being a fan of a football team or rock stars, adhering to the many cultural myths) in the daily lives of young people. This principle of immateriality is however something actually lived, experienced and is not as figment of the imagination. This leads to a different way of searching for "meaning" in life. The search for the "meaning" of life and of things is not something to understand for young people but something to live, to experience; the attention of youth shifts from the pure cognitive sphere to an experiential dimension; what is actually happening is a transition from the traditional comparison with values taken to be indicators of the objective sense of the real, to the search for values, as the subjective expression of what a person regards as important for him/herself;

2.4 realism, which does not in itself mean an absence of ideals but underlines instead the desire and the impelling need to test ideals in daily life, without launching into grandiose renewal projects. Here we note the seed of a broadly felt need to reclaim one's own subjectivity with a pragmatic

approach which almost excludes mediation (of ideologies or of institutions). The demand for new values is therefore expressed in realistic terms: ideals, values, plans, aspirations become "events" marked by a vision of the immediate; young people have a certain ethical tension which is never separate from their own subjectivity or from their own "small, concrete" plan, but this tension is nurtured more by "common sense" than by idealistic choices or alternate large-scale projects. Young people are realistic and disenchanted, completely part of what is daily life. If they see the path to follow, it is the walking along it that is most important, not the destination.

2.5 fragmentation of the youth condition into ill-defined areas for which a young person is neither fully a student nor fully a worker, neither completely employed nor completely unemployed, neither completely a wage-earner nor completely self-employed, neither fully an adult nor fully a young person. This all makes for a certain fragmentation of experience which leads to relativized behaviour and a crumbling of significance systems: fragmentation of psychic time (inability to link past, present, future) and a fragmentation of daily living (inability to understand the different life experiences as a whole). This results in a "fragile" identity which does not have a solid bases. It is not an identity in crisis but an identity for a time of crisis; it is not a weak identity in the meaning of

uncertainty but in the meaning of partiality and fragmentation; it is not an identity which is weak because it is inattentive to itself but the fragility which is the result of the fact that youth reality is an archipelago of autarchic isles not terribly interested in really communicating with each other;

2.6 <u>non-conflict</u> at a time of "weakened" transgression on the part of young people; this non-conflict is apparent first of all in the family, with the phenomenon of "prolonged" co-habitation and hyper-identification with adult models. At this point, it should be again stressed that the family has a particularly important role in the life of young people but in particular ways, which do not exclude the becoming aware of some "critical points", even though the classic "generational conflict" seems to have given way to peaceful and lively communication between parents and children or at most a tacitly but mutually agreed upon silence regarding certain topics and problems.

Even in the school lack of conflict is apparent when young people criticize teachers because they do not teach; while on one hand the school as an institution is still considered the chief instrument for educating and training for life, on the other, when the type of education it provides is discussed, their assessment is severely critical;

2.7 the "distance" of institutions in the sense that institutions on the whole have difficulty in making themselves understood by young people, in speaking their language, and that young people generally have no faith in them; even such an attitude towards institutions in general seems to be much less negative than it was ten year ago. Often the needs and aspirations of young people do not find socially acceptable outlets because the institutions are unable to act appropriately as mediator for these needs. This leads to a search for self-fulfillment in forms of socialization within one's direct, personal control and therefore, if possible, far from the control of an institution; one's own biography is conceived of as open and reversible, separate from global or institutional goals, focused on the present and on choices which are concrete, temporary, and reversible in nature: this contingent concreteness reflects a pragmatism which is almost cynical but in which there is room for caring at a social level (in the form of volunteer work, for example).

****

In conclusion then, what emerges from these behavioural trends is that the young people of the eighties, more than in the past perhaps, speak in terms of what is "possible" and already present; lacking in a "historical memory" they seem to set great store by the experience of their parents and older brothers and sisters; in fact on account of the great

wealth of information in the midst of which they have grown up they know better what they want and they seen aware of the fact that tomorrow is determined even subjectively, by demanding their existential and social identity which is formally recognized but in actual fact, denied. They demand an improvement in what already exists and do not have fantasies about destroying an order to start all over again. They seem intent on preparing their own entry into active adult life and are more full of realism and believe more in the "present" than in some far-off utopia. They claim their right to consider their own identity as "temporary" and to recompose it continually because it is exposed to the complex influences of social experience. In personal relationships they tend to have a preference for direct communication, immediate and momentary enjoyment, the most expressive sensation; to see the growing correspondence between collective goals and the individual need for emotional exchange, the satisfaction of desires which they often mistake for real needs and to believe in the relativism of values.

Those who have called this generation of young people an "open and reversible biography" (Melucci, 1984), or a "the 'quite' generation" (Milanese, 1986), or the "professionals of uncertainty" (P. Allun, 1986) or the "'presentists' of the everyday" (F. Garelli, 1984) or have said they are "an eminently temporary social entity" (Cavalli, 1988) have perhaps devised reductive slogans and coined labels which most young people refuse decisively. But these "youthologists" have nevertheless

grasped the most problematic aspect of a generation which is no longer "child of a desired affluence" but of an "[achieved and] enjoyed affluence" which means that he may be tempted to rest on his laurels or achievements (instrumental and expressive), stifling the taste for the discovery and satisfaction of new needs and values and, on the wings of the symbolic imaginary, yield to a [desire for] "quality" in the everyday, the sense of which is characterized more often with fleeting artifice than with human authenticity.

It is against this background that young people's search for civic and social sense demands renewal and a better oriented educational commitment. It should never be forgotten that they are certainly a social resource but only on certain conditions.

Claudio Bucciarelli - Censis

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RECENT RESEARCH ON THE CONDITION OF YOUTH IN ITALY

MELUCCI, A. L'invenzione del presente, 1982, Bologna, Il Mulino

MELUCCI, A. Altri Codici, 1984, Bologna, Il Mulino

LUTTE, G. et al. I giovani sono diversi, 1984, Rome, Ianua

CESAREO, V. et al. Giovani oggi, First Iard Report, 1984. Bologna, Il Mulino

GARELLI, F. La generazione della vita quotidiana, 1984, Bologna, Il Mulino

CAVALLI, A. (ed.) Il tempo dei giovani, 1985, Bologna, Il Mulino

CENSIS Dossier Giovani: Protagonism e disagio, bi-monthly report of notes and comments, 10, 11, 12, 1986

NICOLI, D. MARTINO, C. Giovani in dissolvenza, 1986, Milan, Angeli

CAVALLI, A. DE LILLO, A. Giovani anni '80, Second IARD Report, 1988, Bologna, Il Mulino